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Canada. Women's Bureau
Administrative arrangements
for handling questions relating
to women workers

Bulletin No. 20

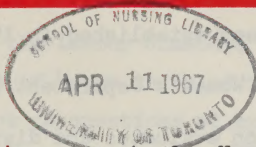


Department
of
Labour

Women's Bureau Bulletin

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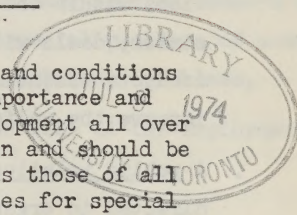
Number XX



December 1966

Administrative Arrangements for Handling Questions Relating to Women Workers

"Problems relating to the employment and conditions of work of women have increased in relative importance and complexity in countries in all stages of development all over the world. While in general these problems can and should be dealt with within the same general framework as those of all workers, there is still a need in most countries for special attention to certain aspects of the problems inherent in the employment of women. These are twofold: first, promotion of the climate, facilities and conditions which will grant them practical equality of opportunity and treatment in economic and social life, and secondly, ensuring that their participation in economic and social life does not adversely affect their health and welfare in particular relation to their maternity function."

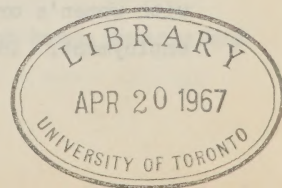


Women Workers in a Changing World, International Labour Office, Geneva, 1963.

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The following information, compiled from a number of sources but supplied principally by the International Labour Office, describes administrative arrangements for handling women workers' problems as they have been organized in various countries. The work of the Women's Bureau of the Canada Department of Labour is sketched in Women's Bureau Bulletin No. XVI, November 1965. It should be noted also that in addition to the Bureau in the federal department, women's bureaus have been established in three provincial departments of labour, those of Ontario, British Columbia and Saskatchewan. Aspects of the role of a women's bureau will be discussed in three articles in the January 1967 issue of The Labour Gazette, Official Journal of the Canada Department of Labour.

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Argentina

The decree of the National Executive late in 1964 provided for the organization of a Women's Department in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security to replace a National Directorate of Social Security and Social Protection of Women which had been established in 1958.

The program of the Women's Department has three main aspects:

- . A technical division evaluates and distributes information to other branches of the Ministry, to private and public organizations within the country and to international groups of like status; deals with subject matter for conferences and conventions, conducts essential studies and proposes legislative changes to improve the welfare of working women.
- . A public relations division is responsible for publicity directed to organizations at municipal, provincial and national levels; studies available materials regarding the activities of women, publishing facts and figures based on its findings, and organizes special courses, seminars and conferences on questions affecting women workers.
- . A bulletin, issued every two months, which is the Department's medium of expression, deals with all types of problems affecting women and reports special events and programs for the improvement of their status both at home and abroad.

The Law that created the Women's Department provided also for an Honorary Advisory Commission to co-ordinate activities designed to improve the position of women workers.

Australia

A Women's Section set up several years ago in the Planning and Research Division of the Department of Labour and National Service has been the means of expanding work that the Department had already been doing on economic and social problems affecting women. The functions of the Section are primarily in the areas of research and fact-finding, with responsibility also for liaison with women's organizations and other bodies with a special interest in women's employment. In co-ordinating and disseminating information about the female

labour force, the Section works through other divisions of the Department rather than undertaking independent development projects.

Austria

Within the framework of the Labour Chambers there is a Committee for Women's Work and the Protection of Women which advises and reports to the Executive of the Labour Chambers on questions of special concern to women.

The Labour Chamber of Vienna, Austrian Arbeiterkammertag, the Austrian Trade Union Confederation and a number of craft unions have special women's units or divisions with responsibility for considering the special problems of women workers and making appropriate proposals for dealing with these problems.

Special attention is given to women also in the work of the employment service and in connection with labour inspection.

Belgium

The Advisory Committee on Employment and Manpower of the Ministry of Labour has a sub-committee on women's work that advises on problems relating to women's employment.

Bolivia

There is a Department for the Social Protection of women in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

Brazil

The Ministry of Labour has a special section concerned with the Protection of Women and Young Workers.

Chile

The Ministry of Labour has a section on Women's and Minors' Work, which deals also with homework.

China (Taiwan)

The Department of Labour of the Ministry of the Interior has a Women's and

Young Workers' Section which, among its various responsibilities, deals with problems relating to the employment of women and conducts studies and enquiries concerning their living and working conditions.

Colombia

Within the Department of Labour there is a section on Women's and Minors' Work, which is responsible also for homework.

Czechoslovakia

The Committee of Czechoslovak Women (Výbor československých žen) is the central body representing women; the 100 members of the Committee are elected by a national convention of women. Its main tasks are to collect important data and experience concerning the life and work of women and to put forward to ministries and other control organs proposals for solving the problems and meeting the needs of working women and mothers. For instance, the Committee suggested a whole series of measures benefiting women under the terms of the new Labour Code, which was adopted by the National Assembly on 16 June 1965.

There are also some 12,500 local, district and regional women's committees advisory to the National Committee. Each of these in its own area is concerned with problems relating to women, such as the supplying of consumer goods, and services necessary to enable women to combine employment outside the home with care of their families and households.

These women's committees have worked so effectively that in some localities they are no longer considered to be necessary. Rather, the main task now is to take all possible measures to increase the participation of women in the work of people's councils, citizens' committees, consumers' councils and other public bodies.

Within the trade unions movement works organizations are encouraged to elect as many women as possible to works councils, which in turn are instructed to convene conferences of women workers to discuss topical problems concerning women that may arise from time to time. They are also instructed that when concluding agreements they should focus attention on the welfare, safety and health of women workers and on action to help women to raise the level of their skills and improve their conditions of work. Many works councils have established special women's commissions to assist in discharging these responsibilities.

El Salvador

Within the National Department of Apprenticeship of the Ministry of Labour there is a Women's and Young Worker's Section. In respect of women, the Section is responsible primarily for research, studies and action designed to improve the employment and training opportunities of girls and women, to better their working conditions and opportunities for development and to extend both these aspects of its work to girls and women in rural areas.

France

On the 29th of September 1965, a decree of the Minister of Labour (Journal Officiel du 3 décembre 1965) established The Committee for Study and Liaison regarding the Problems of Women Workers, with responsibility for examining the problems faced by women in employment and studying measures to facilitate their economic activity and occupational advancement. Provision was made for a commission of experts to assist the Committee.

Membership of the Committee was to consist of:

- 14 persons representing women's organizations and trade unions;
- 4 persons appointed by employers' groups;
- 2 persons named respectively by the official agencies for social security and family allowances;
- 10 persons chosen because of competence in respect to the areas of work assigned to the Committee;
- 4 persons representing the Minister of Labour.

In addition, the Committee was empowered to call into consultation persons who, because of their competence, would be able to contribute to various aspects of its work.

The President and Members of the Committee and of the Commission of Experts were to be appointed for a three-year term, the appointments being renewable. The staff was to consist of a secretary general and two assistant secretaries.

Responsibility for carrying out the terms of the decree was assigned to the directors-general of labour and employment and of social security, each within his own sphere of competence.

A later decree made provision for three representatives from associations concerned with family welfare who were to replace a similar number from government.

Members of the Committee having been named by official decree of 30 November 1965 (J.O. du 2 décembre 1965); its inaugural meeting was held 27 March 1966.

Federal Republic of Germany

The Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs has a unit which deals with questions relating to the employment of women and girls. Several technical sections of the Ministry deal with particular aspects of these questions.

Special units have been established within the employment service structure, at all levels, to deal with the vocational guidance and placement of girls and women.

The trade unions have special divisions or secretariats for women workers' questions.

The Rationalisierungskuratorium (composed of representatives of employers and workers, the Federation of German Industry, the German Association for Industry and Commerce, the Consumers' Research Organization, the Federal Institute for Placement and Unemployment Insurance, the Federal Ministry for the Economy, the Federal Ministry of Postal Service, and the Federal Ministry of Labour (Chairman)) of the Republic has a special study group concerned with women's work and the advancement of their status as workers.

Guatemala

There is a Women's and Minors' Section in the General Inspectorate of Labour.

Indonesia

One of the departments of the Ministry of Social Affairs deals with the welfare of women workers.

Iran

The Ministry of Labour and Social Service includes a body named "Women Workers Welfare Organization".

Ireland

Women serve in the Factory Inspectorate, on bodies advisory to the Minister of Labour regarding the enforcement of labour legislation, and on joint labour committees set up to formulate regulations governing wages, hours of work and other conditions of employment in trades in which large numbers of women are employed.

A special Women's Advisory Committee has been established within the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. The Committee's tasks include the co-ordination of policy or action by affiliated organizations catering for women workers in respect to matters relating to the interests of women; the investigation of problems arising from the employment of women in industry, services and the professions; and the preparation of reports on various aspects of women's employment, conditions of work and remuneration.

Israel

There is a special Women Workers' Unit in the Executive Committee of Histadrut dealing with all questions of particular concern to women workers. At the local level special women's organizers have been appointed on workers' councils to deal with women workers and to maintain contact with the Women Workers' Unit of the Histadrut Executive.

There is also a national Women Workers' Council, serviced by a specialized secretariat, which, amongst other things issues a monthly paper for women workers, Dvar Hapoelet.

Italy

By Ministerial Decree of 1 February 1962, a National Committee on Women's Employment was set up within the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. This Committee conducts studies and enquiries and puts forward to the Minister proposals for improving the conditions of women workers. Among its major preoccupations are:

- vocational guidance and training for women;
- placement and migration of women workers;
- organization and protection of working relations;
- welfare and social security of women workers, including maternity protection;
- problems of particular groups of women workers, including those engaged in homework and in domestic service.

The Committee is made up of a chairman, five experts on one or other of the above-mentioned problems, four representatives of trade unions, four representatives of employers' organizations, and six experts on women's work chosen by national women's organizations. The term of appointment of Committee members is four years, renewable for one further period of four years. The Committee is required to meet at least once every three months. Its secretariat is provided by the General Inspectorate of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

Japan

The Ministry of Labour Establishment Law of 1949 provided for the setting up a Women's and Minors' Bureau. In so far as the employment of women is concerned, the functions of the Bureau are to promote favourable working conditions for women, deal with problems peculiar to women workers and their protection, and to be responsible for research, liaison and co-ordination relating to women's problems in general, including the advancement of their status.

The Bureau includes:

- a General Affairs Section, responsible for over-all planning, liaison, co-ordination, budget and special problems.
- A Women Workers' Section, responsible for matters pertaining to working conditions and protective measures for women workers, the problems of family workers, domestic workers and other labour problems peculiar to women workers. The section conducts enquiries into these problems and distributed information on the basis of its findings.

- . A Women's Section, responsible for liaison and co-ordination in matters relating to the family problems of women and the improvement of their status. It also conducts programmes of enquiry, enlightenment and counselling for the advancement of women.

There is an advisory Women's and Minors' Council of not more than 30 members, representatives of employers' and workers' organizations and some persons with special knowledge and experience of the problems of women workers and/or minor workers. The term of membership is one year.

The Council has three sub-committees which deal respectively with women workers' problems, women's problems more generally, and minors' problems. The Women's and Minors' Bureau of the Ministry of Labour provides the Secretariat of the Council. In addition, at the request of a sub-committee, the Ministry may appoint up to five experts to assist it in its work.

Netherlands

There is a consultative bureau for women workers in the Division for Employment Market Affairs of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Public Health.

There is also an Advisory Committee on Women's and Girls' Work which, either on its own initiative or on request, is responsible for advising public authorities and private organizations on matters relating to the employment of girls and women. The Committee is made up of civil servants from various ministries and representatives of employers', workers', and women's organizations. A senior officer of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Public Health (Directorate of Labour) serves as secretary of the Committee.

New Zealand

The Minister of Labour recently announced the establishment of a National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women. Among its varied concerns, the Council will give special attention to new problems of training and re-training resulting from the increase in numbers of women who are seeking to resume employment in middle life.

Norway

The Ministry of Labour has a Counsellor for Women's Work. Also, an Equal Pay Council, a tripartite body made up of representatives of the Norwegian Confederation of Employers, the Trade Union Federation and the Government, was set up in 1959 to do research on the question of equal pay, women's wages and employment and on practical methods of applying the equal pay principle. The Council has wide and flexible terms of reference. It undertakes publicity and educational activities aimed at stimulating vocational training for young women and conducts studies and investigations of wages and other conditions of work of women, both generally and in particular occupations. It is also responsible for promoting measures to facilitate women's effective participation in the labour force.

Peru

There is a Women's and Young Workers' Department in the Ministry of Labour.

Philippines

A Women and Minors Bureau was set up in the Department of Labor By Republic Act No. 2714 of 18 June 1960. The Bureau's tasks in relation to women include the following:

- (a) to administer labour legislation relating to the employment of women;
- (b) to formulate standards and policies to promote the welfare and working conditions of working women, to increase their efficiency, to secure opportunities for their profitable employment and to provide for their social, educational and cultural advancement;
- (c) to conduct surveys, studies or investigations and submit reports to the Secretary of Labor upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of working women and to make the results available;
- (d) to carry on educational and informational activities and to provide technical advice on matters relating to working women;
- (e) to make recommendations and give technical assistance on these matters; and
- (f) to act as the Government's clearing house for information relating to working women.

The Women and Minors Bureau includes a research and survey division; a standards division; an informational service and publication division; and a field services and inspection division.

Portugal

Two bodies within the Ministry of Corporations and Social Welfare have particular responsibility for women workers' questions. The Service for Social Action deals primarily with problems concerning the drafting and implementation of legislative and other measures relating to women's work. The Women's Missions for Social Action are responsible for study of problems raised by the employment of women, particularly in relation to the vocational training of girls and women and their preparation for home, family and community life.

Sweden

In addition to the special attention given to the problems of women workers by the Labour Market Board and Labour Inspectorate, there is a Special Committee on Female Labour, a cooperative agency for the main employers' and workers' organizations, that is responsible for examining and taking care of matters (other than wages) relating to the employment of women.

This Committee was formed in 1951 by the Labour Market Committee, a general committee of the Swedish Employers' Confederation and the Confederation of Swedish Trade Unions, following an enquiry into women's employment which had been made by the Labour Market Committee. The special committee has four regular members and four deputy members, equally representative of the two sponsoring groups which share the cost of its work. Since July 1956 the Committee has had its own secretariat. At its inception, the function of the Committee was defined as follows:

"The task of this committee should be to follow the steps taken by the community in dealing with questions concerning female workers on the labour market with a view to having these steps designed in such a way as to be beneficial to the interests of both workers and labour market. Furthermore, it should in other respects watch and provide a stimulus for other measures aimed at facilitating the work of female labour. The committee should also utilise different forms of propaganda in an attempt to make women more conscious of their importance to the labour market and to develop their sense of ambitiousness. In addition, it should be the duty of the committee to endeavour to spread the idea of

the equality of the two sexes on the labour market. Questions to which the contracting parties must find an answer, especially wage questions, should not fall within the sphere of activity of the proposed committee."

An article on the work of the special committee, made available to the Women's Bureau through the Royal Swedish Embassy in Ottawa, includes the following comment:

"The questions which the committee has on its programme are often of such a nature that it is impossible to settle them on a short-term basis. They require instead a good deal of intensive information work, especially in view of the fact that one has to fight against a way of thinking that has become routine and bound by tradition. It often happens that these questions are termed women's questions which must be settled by the women themselves. In the opinion of the committee, however, they are to be regarded as family and community questions which should be settled by men and women together."

Thailand

The Department of Labour includes a Women's Bureau.

United Arab Republic

There is a senior woman inspector in the Inspection Division of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs who serves as a point of co-ordination on women workers' questions and engages in some research on their problems.

United Kingdom

The Ministry of Labour has a Women's Consultative Committee, which was set up originally in 1941 with the function of advising the Minister on questions affecting the recruitment and registration of women and on the best methods of securing their services for the war effort. After the war, this was dissolved but was re-appointed in October 1945 to advise the Minister with respect to the re-settlement of women in civilian life. The Committee was re-instated in 1962 under the Employment and Training Act, 1948, to advise the Minister on questions of employment policy relating to women. Since that date appointments have been made for three-year terms.

The Committee consists entirely of women and there are at present 19 members. While appointments are made with a view to maintaining a balance of

interests, members are appointed as individuals and not as representatives of particular organizations with which they may be connected. The Trades Union Congress and the British Employers' Confederation are, however, consulted on the appointment of trade union and employer members respectively. Other interests represented include politics, education, social services, personnel management and broadcasting. Appointments are made by the Minister.

In recent years the Committee has met twice a year. The Parliamentary Secretary normally takes the chair. Representatives of other Government Departments attend when the subject discussed is their concern.

United States of America

(1) Women's Bureau

The Women's Bureau, first established as the Woman-In-Industry Service in 1918, and made permanent by congressional Act of 5 June 1920 (41 Stat. 897; 29 U.S.C. 11), is charged with formulating standards and policies for promoting the welfare of wage-earning women, improving their working conditions, increasing their efficiency, and advancing their opportunities for profitable employment. It investigates and publishes reports upon matters pertaining to the welfare of working women.

Continuous research is carried on by the Bureau's technical experts to help it formulate policies and programmes. Some studies provide information on the trends in the employment of women and on the characteristics of the female work force. Such analyses point out the changes taking place and their impact on women. Other studies are concerned with employment opportunities, wages, and conditions of work in individual occupations or industries. Problems relating to the dual role of women as workers and home-makers receive attention. Factors affecting the earnings or income of women workers, the financial responsibility of women for family support, and special needs of women workers are analysed with a view to action programmes where indicated.

The Bureau makes digests of existing labour laws and regulations covering women, and laws affecting women's civil and political status. It provides technical assistance to governmental and non-governmental organizations on proposed legislation and administrative procedures. It administers no laws. The major types of legislation on which the Bureau prepares basic and popular

reports and provides technical advisory services are equal pay, minimum wages, hours of work, and family and property law.

In co-operation with other bureaus of the Department of Labor, the Women's Bureau assists in programmes on questions affecting employed women for government officials and trade union leaders and members from other countries. Programmes of study and observation are planned for women community leaders from other countries, and local sponsors are obtained with the assistance of national women's organizations. Bureau staff members provide technical materials to international agencies and act as advisers to United States delegates attending international conferences concerned with women's status in political, social, economic, legal and educational fields.

(2) Interdepartmental Committee and Citizens' Advisory Council on the Status of Women

By Executive Order 11,126 of 1 November 1963, the President of the United States established a standing Interdepartmental Committee on the Status of Women and a Citizens' Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

The Interdepartmental Committee on the Status of Women is composed of the Secretary of Labor (Chairman), the Assistant Secretary of Labor (Vice-Chairman), the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare and the Chairman of the Civil Service Commission. The Director of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor is a member of the Committee and serves as its Executive Vice-Chairman.

The Committee has the following tasks:

- (a) to maintain a continuing review and evaluation of the progress of Federal departments and agencies in advancing the status of women;
- (b) to serve as a clearing house for information as to the activities being directed toward, and the progress being made in, improving conditions of special interest to women;
- (c) to stimulate co-operation and the sharing of data, views, and information among Federal agencies, State and local governments, State commissions on the status of women, and public and private organizations having responsibilities and interests in areas of special concern to women;
- (d) to encourage research on factors affecting the status of women in the areas of education, home and community

activities, employment, social insurance, taxes, civil and political rights, labour legislation and related matters; and

- (e) to exchange information with the Citizens' Advisory Council on the Status of Women, established by Part II of this order, on progress toward advancing the status of women and on new developments requiring consideration by the Council and the Committee.

The Citizens' Advisory Council on the Status of Women is composed of 21 members appointed by the President, one of whom is designated as chairman. It meets not less than twice a year. The Council's functions are:

- (a) to serve as a primary means for suggesting and stimulating action with private institutions, organizations and individuals working for improvement of conditions of special concern to women;
- (b) to review and evaluate progress of organizations in furthering the full participation of women in American life;
- (c) to advise and assist the Committee in the evaluation of total progress made and recommend to the Committee, as necessary, action to accelerate such progress;
- (d) to consider the effect of new developments on methods of advancing the status of women and recommend appropriate action to the Committee.

The Interdepartmental Committee referred to above is responsible for transmitting to the President annually a consolidated report concerning the activities of the Committee and the Citizens' Advisory Council.

(3) State Women's Bureaus and State Governors' Commissions on the Status of Women

A number of States have women's bureaus or comparable organs to deal with the employment and conditions of work of women. Governors' Commissions on the Status of Women exist in 48 states. There are two city Mayors' Commissions and a similar Commission in the Virgin Islands.

Uruguay

The Regulations of the National Labour Institute provide for a Women's and Minors' Section within the Inspection Department.

U.S.S.R.

Questions connected with the employment of women in the national economy are regulated by the appropriate planning agencies of the State,

both central and local, just as is the case with the use of men's labour. The programme of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. envisages progress towards achieving the necessary social and living conditions to ensure a combination of motherhood with ever more active and creative participation by women in public labour and public life.

In order to stimulate progress along these lines the Praesidium of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions adopted, in October 1962, a resolution on the improvement of the work of the unions on behalf of women. It also decided to set up within the Praesidium a Public Commission for Women's Work, with a view to rendering advice and practical assistance to the organizations concerned with improving the health protection, labour, rest and everyday conditions of life and work and with the rearing of children.

The Commission consists of 56 persons, both men and women, chosen from all walks of life. Similarly composed commissions, with similar functions, have been set up within the trade union councils on the republic, territorial and regional levels and also within trade union locals. They extend assistance to women in creating good conditions of work and life, in propagating good experience, in improving vocational and professional skills and in ensuring possibilities for continuing educational and technical studies and for cultural development.

There are also women's councils established within the home-management offices, industrial enterprises and rural soviets. They help enlist women's participation in public activities and work. In many cases the executive committees of the district or city soviets of the working peoples' deputies set up regional or city women's councils to consolidate the work of the women's councils of the individual enterprises and institutions. They deal with the problems of organising women's employment in collective farms and industrial enterprises, of child-rearing and care and of vocational training. They also conduct educational activities designed to increase women's participation in economic life and to encourage them to play an active part on an equal footing with men in all aspects of public life.

Venezuela

A special section for the inspection of Women's and Young People's Work exists within the Division for the Co-ordination of Labour Inspection

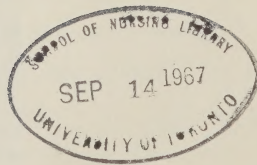
and is responsible, in respect of women, for giving special attention to questions relating to the health, safety and welfare of women workers as a part of the general process of labour inspection.

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"A special effort is needed to promote wider understanding of what is happening to women in the world of work as a basis for meeting their needs and problems in the new and changing economic and social framework in which they arise. It is necessary to respond to change realistically and effectively. Past experience suggests that a successful and adequate response to the problems of women in a changing world is as much a matter of modifying ways of thinking as it is of devising the means of practical action needed in each set of national circumstances to enable women to fulfill their various roles in the family, in the economy and in society at large."

Women Workers in a Changing World - p. 67.

N.B. The responsibilities and functions of the Department for the Protection of Women Workers and Minors in Mexico are described in an article to appear on the Women's Bureau page of an early issue of The Labour Gazette.



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